Kucinich Announces Victory in Protecting Americans and the Environment

EPA Mandates Use of Mercury Filtration Systems by Dentists

Washington D.C. (September 27, 2010) – Domestic Policy Subcommittee Chairman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) today applauded an announcement by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that it will propose a new rule to dramatically reduce mercury waste discharges from dental offices. The announcement follows a May 2010 hearing of the Subcommittee on that subject.

In that hearing, Kucinich pressed EPA to justify its continued adherence to a deal the agency had made with the American Dental Association under President Bush. That arrangement, spelled out in a Memorandum of Understanding, did not require dentists to prevent mercury discharges. Rather, it committed the dentists association to encourage dentists to voluntarily install mercury filtration systems. Unfortunately, none of the memorandum's commitments milestones and goals had been satisfactorily fulfilled at the time of the congressional hearing.

"The number one source of mercury in wastewater and municipal sludge is dental offices. We've known for some time that dentists, as a whole, won't install mercury separators unless they know that they will be required to do so. Sadly, the Bush Administration EPA missed an

opportunity to persuade dentists to install mercury separators, when it entered into a purely voluntary arrangement with the ADA in late December 2008. My Subcommittee expressed our dissatisfaction, and the Obama EPA corrected the error. EPA's announcement today is a significant step in the right direction to remove a serious toxin from the environment," said Kucinich.

Amalgam left over from dental work is often flushed down the drain, contaminating waste water and the air. Technology exists to filter mercury from the water before it leaves the dentist's office, but studies have shown that dentists don't use it unless they face a legal requirement. The EPA rule, expected to be finalized in 2012, will require dentists to use mercury separating technology by 2014.

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